Chapter 13

The Name Remains the Same–But Should It?

Mark D. White

Each fan has his or her favorite member of Black Sabbath, without whom it *just isn't* Sabbath. Some fans can't imagine the band without the unique vocal delivery of Ozzy Osbourne, for others it's the thundering yet nimble bass lines of Geezer Butler, and for still others it's the jazz-inflected drumming of Bill Ward. Some fans will only listen to the original line-up, while others are fine with three or even just two of the founding members. But when it gets down to just one—guitarist Tony Iommi, the constant presence in every line-up of Black Sabbath—things can get dodgy, and fans can easily get frustrated. No matter how much they worship Tony, with his massive riffs and inventive solos, and even if they regard him as the musical core of Black Sabbath, some fans feel it's not alright for him to play under the name Black Sabbath without any of the other musicians who were there from the beginning.

The two previous chapters have debated the metaphysics of whether Sabbath can remain the same band through changes in line-ups. This chapter will focus on ethics. We'll look at the reasons fans have to expect a classic band like Sabbath to maintain a steady line-up—and any ethical obligations that bands have to do this—especially when the band keeps using the same name and reaping the goodwill that comes with it.

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On This Album, the Role of the Singer Will Be Played By …

Those of us who listen to hard rock and metal bands from the 1970s and 1980s are all too familiar with line-up changes—so much so that fans automatically ask upon the release of a new album, "who's singing on *this* one?" For every band like Led Zeppelin that calls it quits after a founding member dies (or leaves), we have many more bands like Deep Purple, which has had 13 members since 1968.[1] For most fans, a change in singer is the most noticeable change, such as when Bruce Dickinson and Rob Halford left Iron Maiden and Judas Priest in the early nineties—both to return at the end of the decade. But other changes can make a big impact as well. Even the most casual fans noticed when guitarists Ritchie Blackmore and Michael Schenker left Deep Purple and UFO. Their replacements may have been very good, but the sound was not the same.

Through many changes, however, one thing usually remains the same: the name of the band. We could be cynical and assume that the motivation for this is purely commercial, coming from the band, managers, and (most often) record labels. But given the gradual ways in which line-ups change, continuity of the band's name is natural. If all but one member stick with the band, playing the music they helped write and make famous, why should the band's name change after one person leaves? But over time, enough musicians may leave to make the band unrecognizable from a decade before.

Although it may seem reasonable to keep the name when members are replaced, it does pose an ethical problem. A band's name is its calling card, its trademark, which appears on all of its albums, tour brochures, and so on. Often there's a slick logo or font to go with it, especially for metal bands; even nonmetal fans can easily recognize the classic logos of Iron Maiden and Metallica.[2] And when fans see the name—especially the large majority of fans who don't religiously follow everything that goes on with the band on their website or Facebook page—they expect to see a certain line-up playing their favorite songs. They want to see Sabbath with Ozzy singing "Iron Man," Purple with Ian Gillan singing "Smoke on the Water," and so forth. And when they see some newbie on stage singing or playing guitar, they feel ripped off, misled, and betrayed. Even the diehard

fans, those who are in the know, often feel this way; they may not be surprised when Michael Schenker doesn't appear at a UFO show, but they may be resentful about it nonetheless.

I Saw It, I Saw It, I Tell You No Lies

But do they have a right to be resentful? Certainly they don't have a legal complaint; they bought an album or a ticket to see Black Sabbath, and they're hearing or seeing the line-up currently using that name. They're probably also hearing many of the songs they expected to hear, just not by all of the people they expected to hear performing them. It's much like seeing a TV show or movie where one of the actors is replaced by another in the same role. Same storyline, same writers, same character—different face. James Bond fans may be disappointed when a new actor takes over the role, but the movies (and the books) are based on the character, not the actor portraying him in any particular film.

So, do bands have an obligation or *duty* to give fans the line-up they want? The philosopher most closely associated with duty is Immanuel Kant (1724–1804), who derived duties from the *categorical imperative*, his formalization of the "moral law." The categorical imperative is used to judge *maxims*, or plans of action, to see if they're consistent with morality. In this case, Sabbath's maxim could have been "we will change band members without changing our band's name." If the categorical imperative rejects this maxim as immoral, that means there is a duty not to change band members without changing the band's name. This duty, in turn, would imply a right on the part of fans to have stable band line-ups as long as the name stays the same.

The most widely known version of the categorical imperative is called the Formula of Universal Law. It says that one should "act only according to that maxim whereby you can at the same time will that it should become a universal law."[3] This formula is based on Kant's position that all persons have an equal moral worth, or *dignity*, based on their capacity for independent choice, or *autonomy*. Therefore, if a person considers doing anything, that person must allow that everyone else must be able to do it also. If there would be an inconsistency or contradiction in everyone taking the action, then the

action is forbidden. For example, lying is considered wrong because if everyone lied, no one would believe anybody, and lies would be self-defeating—and thus we have a duty not to lie.

Does this formula rule out our maxim of changing band members while keeping the same band name? No. If one band wants to do this, we must allow that every band can do this, which doesn't result in any contradiction. All bands *can* do this—and lots do, whenever they want, whether other bands do it or not. Fans may not like it, and it may hurt the bands' interests in the end, but as far as this formula of the categorical imperative is concerned, there's no ethical problem.[4]

Treating People Just Like Pawns in Chess

Another version of the categorical imperative, with a distinctly different feel and emphasis, is the Formula of Respect: "act in such a way that you treat humanity, whether in your own person or in the person of another, always at the same time as an end and never simply as a means."[5] This version is based on dignity and the equal moral status of all persons, as was the Formula of Universal Law, but the Formula of Respect requires that we treat each other (and ourselves) with … well, respect. The idea is that we should not use people for our own purposes without treating them as equals at the same time. So lying is clearly prohibited. When we lie to someone to get something from them we use them as a tool or a "pawn." We do not respect him or her as a person with dignity and autonomy. You also abuse your own good name and reputation when you lie, which is using yourself merely as a means to your end.

How does our maxim of changing band members while keeping the same band name fare with this formula? Changing band members while keeping the same name makes some fans unhappy, to be sure, but does this amount to using them as mere means without at the same time considering them as ends? The concept of "using people" is vague. We make use of other people all the time, after all, especially in commerce. So when is it done wrongfully, or without treating them with respect?

Kant highlighted two ways you can use someone merely as means: coercion and deceit. The problem with each is consent. In cases of coercion the other person is denied the ability to consent to what

you're doing, and in cases of deceit you're making consent impossible by concealing your true actions or motivations. In both cases, you are using the other person as a tool in your schemes—and if you have to use force or lie to a person to get his or her "cooperation," there's probably something wrong with what you're doing anyway![6]

So, do we have coercion or deceit in the case of bands changing members and not changing their names? The bands aren't forcing fans to buy the albums or attend the shows, so coercion doesn't apply. Deceit may exist, however, if the fans aren't aware of the line-up change, or are actually led to believe that members are present that actually aren't. Fans excited about the reunion of the original Sabbath line-up announced in November 2011 were understandably upset when Bill Ward announced in early 2012 that he wouldn't be participating. This was big news in the Sabbath and metal communities, but more casual fans may not be aware that when they buy the new Sabbath album or attend one of the shows, that they won't be seeing the entire original foursome.[7] They may feel cheated or tricked because it's called Black Sabbath and was billed (originally) as the founding members.

No Stranger to Record Companies

Sometimes the artists share our ethical concerns, not only in support of the fans but also in terms of the integrity of their own work. Take the *Seventh Star* album, for instance, which was billed as "Black Sabbath featuring Tony Iommi," even though Iommi's original plan was to record a solo album. Up to that point he had recorded 11 Black Sabbath studio albums, with three different singers, yet all of them featuring Geezer on bass and all but one with Bill on drums. But in 1985, after the dissolution of the *Born Again* line-up with Ian Gillan, Tony found himself alone, and, as he says, "without a band, I got the idea of doing a solo album with all different singers."[8]

Although he eventually recorded the entire *Seventh Star* album with Glenn Hughes—ironically, one of the musicians who joined Deep Purple after Ian Gillan's first departure from that band—record company pressures forced its release under the Black Sabbath name, which Tony was not happy about:

> It was supposed to be a solo album. I certainly didn't want to release it as a Black Sabbath album, because I hadn't written it as a Black Sabbath album. I wanted the freedom for it to sound as it did and tour without calling the band Black Sabbath … In the end [the album] was billed as "Black Sabbath featuring Tony Iommi." Neither I nor Glenn was pleased with it, because we felt we weren't doing the record justice presenting it this way. And to go out and play "War Pigs" and "Iron Man"—it just wasn't right.[9]

Indeed, the subsequent tour, which began with Glenn on vocals but finished with the late Ray Gillen, was billed simply as Black Sabbath—with Iommi the only holdover from previous line-ups—and they did play "War Pigs" and "Iron Man."

We can't be sure what Tony meant when he said "it just wasn't right," but there are several aspects of this situation he may have been referring to. One, as we mentioned earlier, was the element of deception to the fans. It was bad enough that an album that was never intended to be a Black Sabbath album was sold as such, but some fans attended the concerts expecting to see Tony playing with other musicians who had been in Sabbath previously (other than keyboardist Geoff Nicholls, who was rarely featured prominently on stage).

More personal to Tony, we can presume, was maintaining the integrity of the music itself. He hadn't meant to write a Black Sabbath album when he wrote *Seventh Star*. Billing it as Black Sabbath after the fact was a disservice to that album, which deserved to be judged as what it was, a Tony Iommi solo album (or an Iommi/Hughes joint project like 2005's *Fused*). It also casts a different light on the Black Sabbath name, which Tony had done so much to develop over the previous decade and a half.[10] Whatever one may think of *Seventh Star*, it is not, for most fans, a true Sabbath album, despite how the record company chose to label it.

Similar concerns were behind the billing of the band as Heaven & Hell for an album and tours, which saw the *Mob Rules* and *Dehumanizer* line-up of Black Sabbath reunite following the release of the compilation *Black Sabbath: The Dio Years* in 2007. By deciding not to call the band Black Sabbath—despite obvious financial incentives to do so—the band was able to record an album, 2009's *The Devil You Know*, which stood on its own terms. They also avoided the expectations of a Black Sabbath tour in which they would "have to" play the Ozzy-era classics like

"Paranoid."[11] While some fans persisted in calling the band Black Sabbath for obvious reasons, they had no right to expect the band to fit that name. The band could not be accused of any deceit on this front, because they went out of their way to shed the Black Sabbath name (while instead choosing a name that merely invoked the first album with Dio).

Sick and Tired … of Changes

Fans may not like it when the line-up of their favorite band changes, even if the quality and style of the music remain high. While the music may be the most important thing for many fans, we also develop an attachment to the musicians who make it. Even though Tim "Ripper" Owens sounded very close to Rob Halford when he sang the Judas Priest classics, it just wasn't the same. Neil Murray is no less a bass player than Geezer Butler; Cozy Powell was just as amazing a drummer as Bill Ward; and Ronnie James Dio was a more gifted singer than Ozzy Osbourne. Still, some fans are not satisfied with "as good" or even better. They want to hear and see the musicians they grew up listening to in the bands they love, and we can certainly sympathize with their disappointment.

Nonetheless, as we've seen, a band has no obligation to the fans not to change its line-up, or to change its name if it does. Their only ethical obligation is to be upfront and honest about the change, and not to hide it behind deceptive marketing and advertising.[12] Ideally—in the absence of record company pressure and contractual obligations—artists can do what they want with their careers in terms of forming, changing, and breaking up bands, as well as playing the music they want to play. By the same token, though, fans have no obligation to remain loyal to a band as they're going through changes. There are Sabbath fans who only listen to the original line-up with Ozzy, or the Dio years, or the (underrated) Tony Martin era, and these are all valid choices. There is no reason that a fan has to appreciate all the line-ups and all the albums equally to be a "real" Sabbath fan, especially when each line-up is a distinct entity—and when we have the *Forbidden* album to test any "true" fan's devotion![13]

Notes

1. Well, 14 if you count Joe Satriani, who toured with the band in 1993 and 1994 but never recorded with them. And according to Joe Siegler's Black Sabbath website, www.black-sabbath.com, *30* musicians have served in Sabbath over the years, though some never toured or appeared on recordings.
2. Death metal bands take this to the extreme, crafting logos so intricate and literally dripping with imagery that you can't tell what the band's name is!
3. Immanuel Kant, *Grounding for the Metaphysics of Morals*, trans. James W. Ellington (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1993), 421. (This is standard Academy pagination, available in any reputable edition of Kant's work.)
4. A variant of this formula, the Formula of the Law of Nature, is based on consistency of the maxim with other important ends, like the survival of humanity itself (ibid.). But it's hard to see how "Tony Iommi and friends" recording as Black Sabbath endangers that—no matter how much you don't like the *Forbidden* album!
5. Kant, *Grounding*, 429.
6. In a political context, this is known as Kant's *publicity* criterion; as he wrote in his 1795 essay "To Perpetual Peace: A Philosophical Sketch," "All actions that affect the rights of other men are wrong if their maxim is not consistent with publicity," in *Perpetual Peace and Other Essays*, trans. Ted Humphrey (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1983), 381.
7. At the time of this writing that is how things are shaping up, but, like other fans, I hold out hope that the rest of the group will come to terms with Bill Ward.
8. Tony Iommi with T.J. Lammers, *Iron Man: My Journey Through Heaven and Hell with Black Sabbath* (Cambridge, MA: Da Capo Press, 2011), 246. (Tony would, of course, realize this goal of a solo album with multiple singers in 2000 with *Iommi*.)
9. Ibid., 249.
10. Think of the damage that a radical change of style does to a band's reputation; for instance, see my chapter "Metallica Drops a *Load*: What Does a Band Owe Its Fans (and Vice Versa)?" in William Irwin, ed., *Metallica and Philosophy: A Crash Course in Brain Surgery* (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2007), 199–209.
11. Even among the band members themselves, there is no universally agreed upon explanation for why they chose not to use the Black Sabbath name. One likely reason, though, was to avoid confusion with

the original line-up, which had recently been inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame. See Martin Popoff, *Black Sabbath FAQ: All That's Left to Know on the First Name in Metal* (Milwaukee: Backbeat Books, 2011), 295–314.

12. Case in point: Tony's very short-term employer Ian Anderson recently released a follow-up to the Jethro Tull classic *Thick as a Brick*; the album, *Thick as a Brick 2*, and the ensuing tour, were billed as "Jethro Tull's Ian Anderson," even though no other members of Tull are involved (and the band itself is still together).
13. This chapter is dedicated to my father, who introduced me to Sabbath as a wee lad, and with whom I've shared a passion for the band ever since. (Sadly, I have not yet convinced him of the brilliance of Cannibal Corpse, but I persevere.)